marriage. But his closeness to this subject is, with respect to this book, a plus. Though the gay marriage issue has raised passions on both sides, Rauch blends his own passionate belief in the rightness

courage gay men to leave behind the days of promiscuity: "The underground gay culture of the Long Dark Age, and then the sex-is-love, life-is-play culture of the Long Dark Age's aftermath, had

but he has a vision of an America in which gay marriage is accepted, and even celebrated, by all. Recent events in Massachusetts seem to show that the process is just beginning. ▼

Long live the avant-garde

Michael Wallin's poetry of gay sexuality

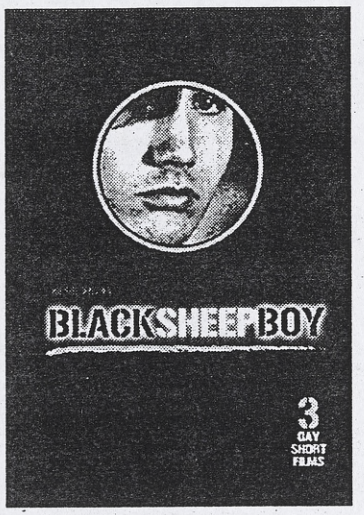
by David Nahmod

During the early 1970s, there was much discussion about the merging of adult films and art films. Gay titles like *Boys in the Sand* ('71) and straight titles like *The Devil in Miss Jones* ('72) combined graphic sex with dark, moody camerawork and the pretense of emotional subtext. But nothing could hide the fact that these films were made for one reason: to make money by titillating audiences with hardcore sex.

San Francisco-based experimental filmmaker Michael Wallin, whose DVD collection of short films, *Black Sheep Boy,* is now in stores, attempts with his work to do what the early porn directors could not: to show the poetry in graphic gay sexuality. Wallin, a former teacher of film at San Francisco State and City College, prefers the avant-garde.

"I like the fact that avant-garde films are not manipulative like standard Hollywood films," he told me. "They don't spoonfeed you a story or a message. They allow the viewer to participate in what they're seeing."

To Wallin, avant-garde film is more akin to poetry or a painting.



"The camera is not used simply to document, but is used creatively via framing, composition, light, movement, editing. It has unlimited possibilities to change notions of timing and pacing. Avant-garde exploits film as a unique artform, with its own tools as a medium of expression."

Wallin's first film, *The Place Between Our Bodies* ('75), is the third of the three films in the *Black Sheep Boy* collection. It was his graduate film at SF State. He did not indicate in his proposal to the school that it would contain graphic sex, but said that it would be about "sexuality."

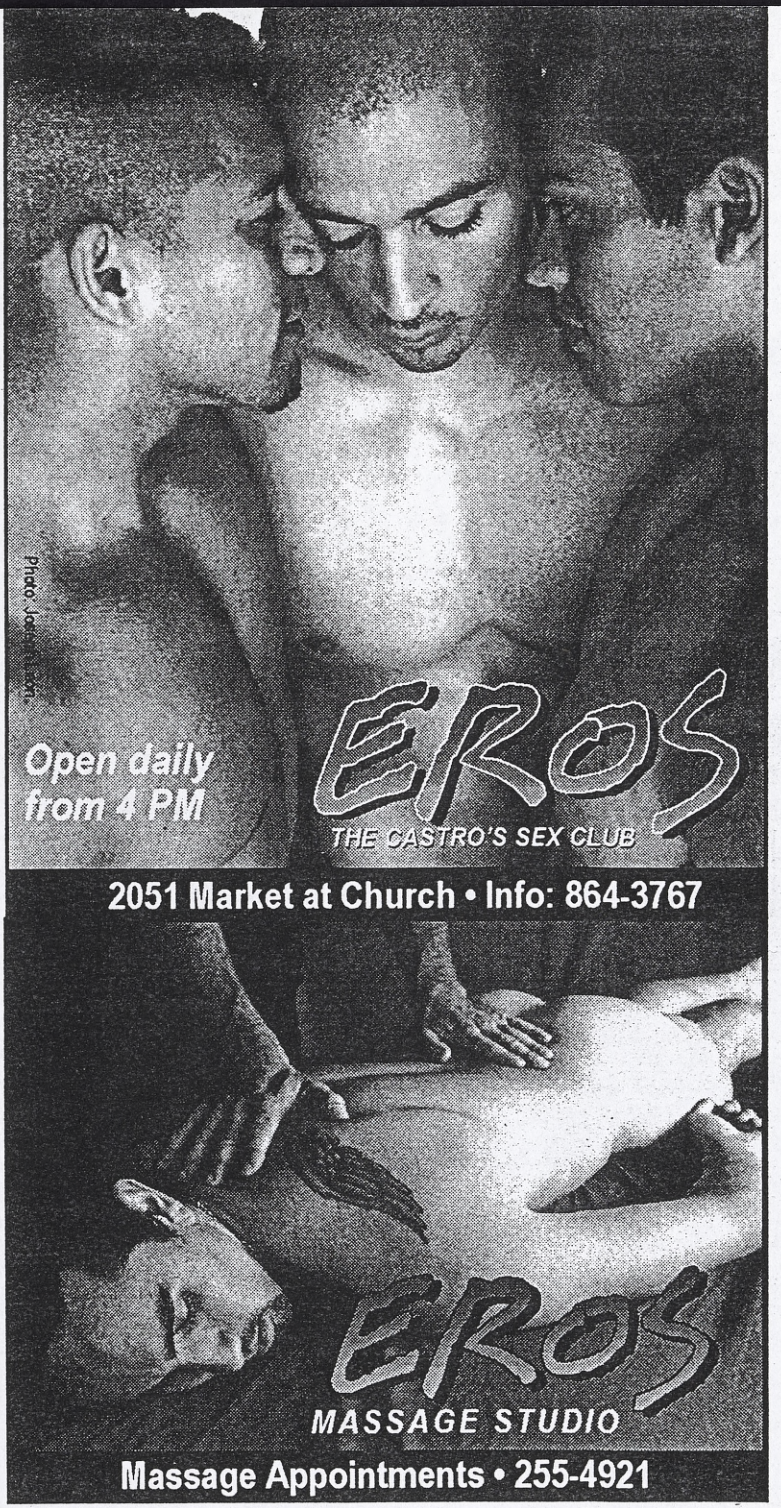
"It's the first film to portray gay sex that isn't porn," he said. In the pre-AIDS-era film, Wallin and his then-lover are seen fucking *sans* condoms. According to the director, the sex is "playful and celebratory."

When the film was screened at the school, Wallin's teachers were stunned. People either said nothing or congratulated the film's beauty and courage. *The Place Between Our Bodies* is a romantic, deeply erotic portrait of gay cruising and gay love *circa* the mid-'70s. That now-legendary era of free sex enjoyed by our country's first fully out community has been romanticized out of proportion by those who were there and those who wish they were.

Polk Street cruise

Wallin was there, with his camera, and the first third of the 33-minute film shows the city's endless parade of beautiful young men cruising Polk Street. The Le Salon Book Store, the Tom Kat Theatre, and other landmarks of '70s gay life are seen in a series of shots that capture the reality of the era's cruising culture as no other film has.

next page ▶



San Francisco
(415) 430-1199
Oakland
(510) 343-1122
Palo Alto
(650) 223-0505
Concord
(925) 695-1100
San Jose
(408) 514-1111
Vallejo
(707) 656.1111
BROWSE & REPLY TO ALL ADS FREE free code 3554
MEGA phone
MORE LOCAL #s IN THE BAY AREA! Friendly 24/7 Customer Service (800) 289-1489 • 18+ ©2004 PC LLC
MegaMates.com
The next generation of Internet Dating FREE!
Live Video / Audio / Text Chat • Create, Send & View Videos
Totally Private • No Ads Or Pop-Ups
© 2004 Progressive Web LLC Friendly Customer Care 24/7 (800) 289.1489
MegaMates.com

arette in a jade cigarette holder, and holding a glass of sherry with a hazelnut in it. We were listening to Boccherini. I said, 'Do come in,' and when they stepped through the door, they practically fell backward, they were so disoriented."

Also captivating are the longer historical summaries that Fellows provides, such as those for Cooksville and Mineral Point, two small towns in Wisconsin.

"Though at first it may seem to be at odds with the impulse to preserve," Fellows writes, "a romantic fascination with decay, even destruction, is closely related to an enchantment with restoration. Indeed, without a period of neglect, decline, and perhaps the threat of destruction,

Boys explores a pairing far from a stereotype, gay men and farming. One might also suppose that as a "drab and boring" lesbian, as contributor Randy Plaisance la-

sion to Preserve, which gave me insight into a phenomenon I had long known about but never truly examined. ▼

Michael Wallin

◀ page 43

Wallin then appears onscreen with his former lover Mark. This beautiful young couple is seen rolling in the grass, preparing food, playing with their cat. They are also seen making love in a scene as graphic as any adult film, while the two discuss their feelings about each other in a deeply intimate voiceover. The lovemaking is beautiful, erotic, and so real and personal that it becomes embarrassing at times!

"My goal for the film is for each viewer to be able to see or find a bit of themselves in the film" Wallin says, though he admits that he cringed a bit when his mother saw it.

"She asked for a private screening. Afterwards, she asked me if sex was the only thing in my life that was important to me. That was the subject matter of the film, I told her."

The title film of the DVD collection, *Black Sheep Boy* ('95), was a hit on the film-festival circuit in the '90s, and compared to the works of Kenneth Anger and Jean Genet.

More suggestive than explicit, it came about through Wallin's infatuation with Nick, a beautiful young man he knew at the time. He shot some footage of Nick, who disappeared, so he decided to focus the film on 10 young men, all archetypes of the dark-featured younger males he had come to be drawn to.

"I boldly approached young men in the Castro, at Cafe Flore, and introduced myself as a filmmaker. This got easier to do each time! I told them that the film was fully funded, about gay sex, but not pornographic."

He was amazed at how receptive most of the young men were. He did a photo shoot with each, showed them some of his earlier works, and everything came together. The film became a celebration of the fetishism of male youth, many of whom share their own fetishes with the camera. "The challenge was to have the narration connect with the images, to convey the idea and feelings of the film's subject matter."

Though not as graphic as his earlier works, *Black Sheep Boy* remains deeply personal and erotic. Michael Wallin understands how to present true erotic emotions on the screen as few filmmakers have.

The disc is rounded out with *Decodings,* a 15-minute film which makes very poetic use of home movie and newsreel footage from the '40s and '50s.

Currently preparing a new film about his relationship with his straight, fraternal-twin brother, Wallin now works as a therapist, helping people untie the knots that bound their unhappy relationships. A deeply spiritual man, he describes himself as a Bu-Jew. Culturally Jewish, he finds comfort in the teachings of Buddhism. Single, living in a modest, comfortable house near the beach, Wallin said he'll continue his search for sexual and emotional fulfillment through his films. It's a journey he invites us all to participate in. ▼

Open Sunday Thru Thursday 9:00am - 2:00am, Fri & Sat 9:00am-7:00am

THE TEAROOM THEATER

STILL THE BEST DEAL IN TOWN

145 EDDY ST. BETWEEN TAYLOR AND MASON STs. ONE BLOCK FROM HALLIDIE'S PLAZA (CABLE CAR, BART AND MUNI STATION)
Information Tele: 415-885-9887

OPEN DURING CONSTRUCTION

LIVE EROTIC J/O SHOWS

SUN THRU THUR:
1.00 – 4.00 – 7.30 PM.
FRI AND SAT:
1.00 – 4.00 – 7.30 – 10.00 PM.

AUDITIONERS FOR A LIVE SHOW JOB ARE WELCOME WHEN THERE IS AN OPENING.

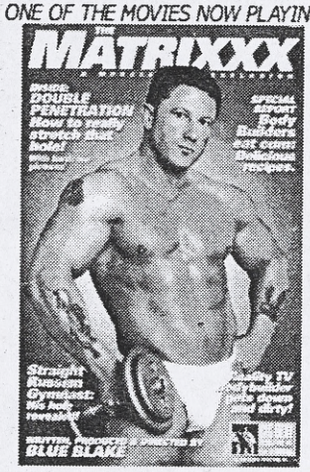
EARLY BIRD SPECIAL ADMISSION PRICE (MON. THRU FRI. ONLY) SUBJECT TO CANCELLATION OR CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE.

FREE LOCKER WITH REFUNDABLE KEY DEPOSIT.
WE ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ITEMS LOST FROM LOCKERS.

SMOKERS ARE ALLOWED TO EXIT TO SMOKE, 5 TO 10 MIN. ONLY

RETURN PASS ARE GOOD FOR ONE TIME ONLY

ONE OF THE MOVIES NOW PLAYING



8 FIRST RUN MOVIES + 3 CLASSICS
FROM THE BEST MOVIES EVERY WEEK